



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

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# News Release

## **OPERATION PREDATOR ARRESTS SURPASS 5,000**

*Illinois accounts for more than 200 arrests in initiative targeting child sex predators*

CHICAGO – More than 200 of the 5,000 child sex offenders arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as part of an ongoing international initiative known as Operation Predator have occurred in Illinois, making the state one of the top 10 in the nation in terms of most arrests.

Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE, announced today that the 20-month long effort has surpassed 5,000 arrests nationwide. Some cases of those individuals arrested in Illinois include:

- Dr. Joseph Nurek, a Chicago school principal, was arrested for having thousands of sexually explicit images of children on his computer and was recently charged with traveling across state lines to have sex with a minor. Dr. Nurek remains in federal custody without bond.
- Michael Clements, an Army sergeant major, traveled from Italy to Naperville, Ill., to have sex with “a 14-year-old girl” he met in an Internet chat room. However, the girl was actually an undercover officer.
- Dr. Marc Watzman, a Chicago pediatrician, had more than 3,000 sexually explicit images of children on his computer and date-rape drugs hidden in his car.
- Scott Wolters, an Aurora police officer, who purchased child pornography found on three of his home computers.
- And most recently, a Highland Park High School security guard, was arrested after authorities discovered that his home computer contained numerous images of child pornography involving family incest.

Operation Predator is a comprehensive initiative aimed at those who prey on and exploit children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign national predators whose crimes make them deportable.

“These arrests are an outstanding achievement as well as a sobering statistic,” said Elissa A. Brown, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Chicago office. “Child sex predators can come from all walks of life, and we know from the arrests we’ve made that they can occupy positions of trust in the community – as teachers, as police officers, and as members of our armed forces. That makes the work we are doing in Operation Predator all the more urgent.”

Operation Predator evolved out of ICE’s mission to find and deport illegal aliens – particularly those with criminal records, and reflects the agency’s traditional public safety mission. Those arrested fall into four general categories:

**Foreign National Child Predators:** More than 85 percent of the arrests in Operation Predator involve foreign national sex offenders whose crimes make them removable from the United States. To date, more than 2,100 of these predators have been deported, including Ankil Bhavsar, an Indian national who broke into a physically disabled woman’s home in DuPage County and sexually abused her. Bhavsar was deported from Chicago to India Jan. 31.

**International Child Sex Tourists:** Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE’s attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents made 14 arrests, including the first 12 arrests, under the child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act.

**Human Smuggling & Trafficking of Children:** The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking have become more violent and more profit-driven than ever before. At the same time, some of their victims are getting younger and younger.

**Internet Child Pornography:** Drawing on ICE’s cyber crime investigative expertise, ICE is tackling the crimes that cross the nation’s virtual borders. One massive investigation resulted in more than 1,200 arrests worldwide, and marks the first time the government has gone after the financial side of child pornography. Moreover, through the National Child Victim Identification System, more than 1,600 pornographic images containing child pornography have been authenticated.

Additional information about Operation Predator is available on the Web at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov). ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*